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THE STRENGTHENING OF LATIN AMERICA

BY CHARLES H. SHERRILL

IN view of the changing relations to us and to the rest of the world of the great continent to the south of us, there are here suggested certain map changes, advanced in the hope that from the betterments already achieved by Pan-Americanism, even greater benefits may be realized in the future for the hemisphere which to Pan-Americans means home. It is clear that the fixed policy of the United States is forever to refrain from taking any territory from any of our fellow-republics. No such alterations in the map are in prospect, nor should they ever be possible. But is it not probable that certain changes will take place in that portion of the map belonging to Latin America, not changes born of aggression, but those making for the real strengthening of existing Governments by combinations thereof?

Why should we not seek to draw aside the curtain behind which lies the future? Perhaps it might be we ourselves who, by some act of national altruism, could initiate such combinations as would make them of greater strength for our neighbors—our friends. Monroe, by his famous pronouncement of 1823, attempted to protect us from all danger of entanglement in European politics, but he stopped at forbidding future European colonization here, whereas the Venezuelan crisis of 1895 so splendidly handled by President Cleveland proved that existing European colonies were as pregnant of trouble as future ones. British Guiana existed in Monroe's day, and yet England's desire to extend the borders of that colony at the expense of its neighbor, Venezuela, precipitated the very situation against which the Monroe Doctrine was set up. If Monroe was right, and right he undoubtedly was, then his doctrine should be ful-

filled and this hemisphere purged of existing colonies as well as protected against future ones.

And this is a most opportune moment for us to offer to pay Denmark, Holland, France and England for their colonial possessions in the New World, since never before have they been put under so great a financial strain as to make such payments welcome. This altruistic offer to free all Pan-American soil from European domination would ring especially true when coming from the nation which had already expended millions to free Cuba. Of course Canada would not be included in this suggestion, for the very good reason that she is in an entirely different case from all the other colonial possessions in the New World because she is self-governing, speaks the language of the mother country, and (most important difference of all) can have her complete freedom at any moment she desires. Thus she is entirely different from the other colonies.

With those who urge that European colonies in the Americas are better off than they would be if free, I have no patience. Do such people know that in all the three Guianas, a territory the size of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, there are less than 200 miles of railroad? Compare that with the 588 miles in Venezuela, next adjoining them, or the 614 miles in Colombia, and also compare the poor schooling facilities or none at all that characterize the three Guianas with the 1,700 schools of Venezuela or the 5,000 of Colombia! In British Guiana, the most advanced of the three Guianas, there are 10,000 whites, 126,000 East Indian coolies, and 115,000 negroes, all brought there for what purpose? To advance the colonization of this hemisphere, or to exploit the land for its European masters? This East Indian coolie traffic was started in 1838 by John Gladstone, father of the great English Prime Minister. The French have brought many Siamese and Chinese into French Guiana, and the Dutch many Japanese into Dutch Guiana. French Guiana is chiefly known for its penal settlements, in one of which Dreyfus languished so many years. The annual foreign trade of the French islands steadily declined from 1882 to 1907—that of Martinique from 67 to 34 million francs annually, and that of Guadeloupe from 68 to 29 millions. The population of the Danish West Indies steadily decreased from 43,000 in 1835 to 31,000 in 1901. Compare figures like the foregoing with the steady upward progress of free Latin America, and

it puts European colonial systems in a bad light, at least as practised on the soil of the New World.

All this European control of Pan-American territory should be eliminated, and it is our duty, following in Monroe's footsteps, to initiate the movement. Furthermore, the cost of the operation would not be excessive, as almost none of these colonies are able to pay their own way, and their only value as military bases would be in case their European owners wished to attack us, so ridiculous a hypothesis as hardly to be figured in the purchase price.

Suppose that either by a money purchase or by offering in exchange the Philippine Islands, we could eliminate Europe from all her colonial possessions to the south of us and also her interference with our control of our Panama Canal, would we not, by gaining freedom for colonies and canal, not only make a substantial contribution to true Pan-Americanism, but also materially improve our own chance for continued tranquillity in the future? Does not this provide a reasonable and honorable solution of the vexed Philippine problem?

But if all these colonies should be freed from their European masters there at once arises the interesting problem of what is to be done with them—are they to be started as independent republics or are they to be joined to some neighboring commonwealth? If the alternative of making them all independent should prevail, can we blind ourselves to the fact that some of them are really too small for such a lot, and also that in no case have their European masters equipped them either politically or by the physical development of their territory for any form of self government? If it be suggested that all such freed land be turned over to some adjoining republic, would not the prospect of such territorial largesse arouse unfortunate discussion (to say at least!) as to which country had the better right to them for either historical or geographical reasons? Either one of these possible adjustments would, if sweepingly adopted, cause unnecessary difficulties. Let us see if there is not some safe middleground along which there can securely proceed an orderly rearrangement of geographical lines which shall not only benefit the liberated colonies, but also at the same time strengthen existing Governments in South and Central America. Because this is a Latin American problem, we must begin by adjusting ourselves to their point of

view, or at least do so as far as we possibly can. Unless we try so to do, we may evolve a plan that will suit us, but one which almost surely will fail to meet with the approval of the very people most concerned. Starting therefore with a determination constantly to consider the South American viewpoint, what better plan can we Anglo-Saxons devise for the major portion of the freed territory, the three Guianas, than to help them to further the statesmanlike project of Bolivar, the liberator of the northern part of that continent from the Spanish yoke? Why should not we, by our gift of the freed Guianas, powerfully help to reconstitute the New Granada or greater Colombia of his dreams—a splendid confederation of the Guianas with Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador? The flags of those three last republics are so similar as to bear striking testimony to their historical relations in the past, and further, would make very easy the selection of the national flag of this new and powerful republic, so much more powerful in combination than are all of the integral parts as separate states.

Nor can the lack of railway intercommunication be fairly urged as an argument against such an assembling of the parts into a whole, because the united country would enjoy a continued sea front on the Caribbean Sea, and, through the Panama Canal, along the Pacific Ocean. This continued littoral would provide the same sort of sail and steamship connection and cohesion that is provided for Chile by its longer Pacific shore line. Back from the sea there still exist the old Spanish cart roads, connecting up all this inland country, and it is surprising to learn how much they are still used by the Indians to transport their wares such long journeys as that from lofty Quito down across Colombia and on to interior Venezuela. If the reader will take up some modern map he will be surprised to see how many large rivers, feeders of the Orinoco, that great artery of Venezuela, extend westward far into Colombia and Ecuador, thus providing still another and a cheap channel of communication between those districts.

If there should arise a conflict of claims among the capitals of the existing republics for the honor of obtaining the seat of the new federated government, a solution could be found by turning to the writings of sundry statesmen of those very countries, where are to be found suggestions of some neutral inland and central point so situated at the

junction of interior lines of communication as to please all by its ready accessibility. Such a point would be San Fernando de Atabapo, in western Venezuela. It was of this town that Humboldt (reporting trips made by him from 1808 to 1814) says:

San Fernando de Atabapo stands near the confluence of three great rivers (Orinoco, Guaviare, Atabapo). Its situation is similar to that of St. Louis . . . at the junction of the Mississippi with the Missouri and the Ohio . . . In proportion as the activity of commerce increases by these immense rivers, the towns situated at their confluence will become centre points of civilization.

He predicted so correctly the future of St. Louis, that this great geographer may yet prove right about San Fernando de Atabapo. However, any such minor questions as the location of the capital would fade into insignificance beside the realization of the New Granada of Bolivar's dreams, a stately republic with a population of ten and a half millions, with a commanding position on the Caribbean Sea, and a shoulder on the Pacific—a considerable nation with much more voice in the family of nations than have the divided states of Bolivar's house as they now stand. In passing, it is important to notice that all these northern peoples, so assembled under one flag, could not fail to recognize our altruism in rendering that assembling possible by our purchasing the release of the three Guianas. If it obtained us no other advantage than regaining us the good will of Colombia, it would be well worth while.

Another possible readjustment might be the allocation of French Guiana, the most easterly of the three, to Brazil, thus completing on the north the eastern coast-line of that republic, while Dutch and British Guiana would go to complete the north coast republic of their neighbors on the west.

While speaking of Brazilian boundaries it is highly appropriate to remark that no consideration of the map of South America would be complete without a reference to that great Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron Rio Branco of Brazil. During his long tenure of office he devoted himself unceasingly to the adjustment of boundary disputes between Brazil and her neighbors. Because she joins boundaries with every other country of the continent but Chile and perhaps Ecuador, his labors in closing up so many disputed questions contributed greatly to guarantee peace by eliminating many long-standing elements of friction.

I well remember it was generally remarked that the delegates of the different Central American states to the 4th Pan-American Conference at Buenos Aires in 1910, were, if considered as a whole, in every way equal to the delegations sent there by any of the larger republics of the mainland, strong as some of the latter undoubtedly were. If the Central Americans had represented one larger instead of so many smaller states, they would have had even a larger voice in the councils of that convention than they enjoyed.

Every well-wisher of the Spanish-speaking republics will agree that just as such a confederation would strengthen the political and economic position of the northerly states of the mainland, so a similar combination of the Central American republics would also benefit them and lend importance to their federation. The stronger all such groupings of republics become the less they are apt to fear and therefore distrust us, and anything which tends to diminish that distrust is of great value to all concerned. Furthermore, the stronger such groupings become, the better able are they to take their part in causing the territory of this hemisphere to be respected by outsiders.

And how can we best help to bring into being such a Central American Federation? Could any argument on its behalf coming from us be more effective than the obviously altruistic one of offering to add to its united territory that of British Honduras if and when the plan of freeing all these foreign-owned colonies shall have been effectuated? This offer could be made conditional on the argeement of the other republics to unite into a Confederation which should receive this additional territory. In this connection, because one of those states, Nicaragua, has already accepted the principal of the so-called Platt Amendment (by a signed treaty not yet ratified by our Senate) which gives the United States certain rights in regard to the relations of Cuba with the outside world, it is our duty frankly to speak of the terms of that document, for such an article as this would be incomplete without its inclusion. It is common knowledge that this amendment was drafted by Elihu Root while Secretary of State, but bears the name of Senator Platt of Connecticut because it was he who introduced it into the Senate. The portions affecting the foreign affairs of Cuba are as follows:

Article I. The Government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign Power or Powers which will

impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorize or permit any foreign Power or Powers to obtain by colonization or for military or naval purposes, or otherwise, lodgment in or control over any portion of said island.

Article II. The Government of Cuba shall not assume or contract any public debt to pay the interest upon which, and to make reasonable sinking-fund provision for the ultimate discharge of which, the ordinary revenue of the Island of Cuba, after defraying the current expenses of the Government, shall be inadequate.

Article III. The Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the Government of Cuba.

Inasmuch as Nicaragua has accepted the principle embodied in this Platt Amendment, its entry into a Central American Confederation would necessitate negotiation concerning that amendment with the new combination. As British Honduras would probably be offered by us also protection by this amendment, it might be that under these new circumstances and in consideration of our freeing British Honduras, the other states—Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama and Salvador—might care to have the new and greater republic accept our co-operation in this regard. It is a matter for negotiation, but that it must be faced can not be overlooked here.

The West Indian islands now belonging to nations of Europe would, if purchased by us, lie in very different case from the other colonial possessions similarly released by us from their foreign owners. The territory on the mainland could, as we have just seen, be added to existing republics adjoining them and thus serve the threefold purpose of strengthening those republics, improving their own condition by the practise of self-government, and lastly, advance the cause of Pan-Americanism by showing added proofs of our altruism toward it. But there would be no free territory directly adjoining the purchased West Indian islands, and furthermore they are important defensive points which it is our duty to hold, because it is our duty to the whole hemisphere to neglect nothing which may defend for all of us the free use of the Panama Canal. For this reason, if for no

other, we should retain under our flag such of those Caribbean islands as we may acquire by purchase except the two or three lying close against the coast of Venezuela, which should be given to that country. But in the freeing of the Falkland Islands from English rule, no such geographical reason or defensive duty obtains as in the case of the West Indies, and those Falkland Islands should therefore be restored to the Argentine Republic.

What we have said thus far disposes of that portion of map alteration which could be furthered by our gifts of newly freed territory. We now turn to an entirely different state of affairs, existing at the other end of the continent, in the temperate latitudes, where climate is aiding progress in many ways, of which immigration is not the least important.

What is the state of affairs that we shall find existing among those forward-looking peoples? Already there has been recognized the value—the world-significance—of combining units to form a whole on external questions. Already this realization of world-tendencies has taken shape in certain political engagements entered into by Argentina, Brazil and Chile by means of several recently signed treaties which together result in what is popularly known as the A. B. C. Alliance. Those treaties are doubtless serving a useful purpose because they make for a better understanding between the contracting nations. Nevertheless, it is to be doubted if those treaties will in the more or less distant future prevent a changed alignment in that part of the world, a more natural combination, based on common language, climate and racial tendencies.

How long can there be deferred in that part of the continent a confederation which the rapidly increasing ties of railroad and river connection between republics having the same language and institutions as have Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay, would seem naturally to make of them? The Andes that so long kept Chile and Argentina apart are already conquered by one railroad and soon will be by others, and so will prove no more of a political barrier between those peoples than does the lofty Sierra Nevada range which separates California from the rest of the United States. There are not a few who believe that if and when a political union is effected between Chile and Argentina, the former, though placed as is Cali-

fornia in our union of States, will be rather the Ohio of the combination, which means that the statesmen of what is now Argentina will have to look to their political laurels in the new confederation lest the Chilians snatch them away!

As for Bolivia, the two railways now connecting her with Chile, and the new line from La Paz, her capital, to Argentina, will prove strong arguments for Bolivia's joining a confederation having all its political elements in common with hers.

Just as Bolivia would be linked with a combined Chile and Argentina by three great railway arteries, so Paraguay has its capital, Asuncion, already connected both by railway and by steamship with Buenos Aires, the majestic metropolis of all South America. That enormous artery of trade, the River Plate, is so much greater than any of our own rivers that it is difficult to make our people understand what a highway of commerce it affords from Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, stationed at its mouth, all the way up to Asuncion and beyond, a huge physical argument for the union of Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina. One has only to live a few months on either bank of this great river to learn of the close affiliations already existing between Buenos Aires and Montevideo, as well as between the nations of which they are the capitals, ties not only of commerce and race, but also of frequent intermarriage.

The more one comes to know of the people and conditions of that part of the world, the more irresistible becomes the conclusion that some such combination of their Spanish-speaking republics will ensue. This alliance between Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay is a natural one, and would bring into being a united and majestic nation of eighteen million souls, a balance in their temperate latitudes to the great Portuguese-speaking republic of the tropics: Brazil, with her twenty-one millions.

Perhaps there is here sketched nothing but the dream of a dreamer, but at least it seeks to advance the political importance before the world of his friends in the southern continent.

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